



CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION

Protecting Children • Supporting Families • Providing Quality Care

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Child Protective Services (CPS) provides 24 hour, seven day a week intake, screening and investigative services for reports of suspected child abuse and neglect. CPS investigates appropriate referrals to assess the safety and protection needs of children and, when necessary, intervenes by providing services designed to increase safety and protect children from further harm.

In order to remain involved with families more than 90 days, CPS must obtain either a court order or a voluntary service agreement with families at risk. CPS may include in-home protective services to keep a child safely in the family home or temporary out-of-home care during assessment or reunification efforts. If risk warrants ongoing placement, dependency must be proven in court and cases are prepared for transfer to ongoing child welfare services.

CPS, law enforcement, courts, and community teams are all critical elements of the child protection system; each with a distinct role, but integral to the checks and balances designed to protect children from abuse and neglect as well as safeguard families from unnecessary disruption.

CPS Intake

- ◆ Referral information is “screened for sufficiency” to determine if grounds exist to investigate the allegation.
 - Does the allegation meet the statutory requirements of abuse or neglect or does the report allege that the child is at imminent risk of harm? and
 - Was the person alleged to have abused the child acting as a parent? and,
 - Can the child be located?
- ◆ If there are sufficient grounds to investigate, the referral is “accepted” for investigation and is rated according to the potential “risk” of harm to the child.
 - A “risk tag” of 1 (low) through 5 (high) is assigned based on a standardized risk assessment tool and the factors alleged in the referral.
- ◆ A “standard of investigation” is assigned based on the risk tag and other factors in the referral.
 - High Standard: Requires face-to-face contact with child, parent, and alleged perpetrator (required for risk tag 3-5 and all licensed facility complaints).
 - Low Standard: Allows response by letter or direct referral to a contracted alternative response service provider in the community (allowed only for risk tag 1-2).

CPS Investigation - High Standard Investigation

- ◆ CPS social workers interview the child, parents, and alleged perpetrator and assess the potential risk for future harm using a standard risk assessment tool.
- ◆ Additional investigation, such as collateral contacts with physicians, teachers, or other people with knowledge of the child, is conducted as necessary to determine if children need protection.
- ◆ When children must be removed from their own home to assure safety, CPS works in close collaboration with law enforcement and the courts.
 - Only law enforcement may take a child into immediate custody for placement without a court order. In these cases, a court hearing must be held within 72 hours of the placement.
 - Only a court may order the non-emergent or longer-term removal of children from their families.
- ◆ Law enforcement conducts criminal investigations when criminal laws are alleged to have been violated.
- ◆ The CPS worker makes a determination or a “finding” regarding whether abuse or neglect occurred.

CPS Service Delivery

- ◆ Based on the risk assessment and findings, a determination is made about whether services are needed, what services will be provided and how services will be arranged.
 - Services can be *voluntary*, by mutual agreement with the family, or
 - Services can be *involuntary*, which requires court oversight
- ◆ CPS provides services as agreed to in the service plan developed with the family, and refers families to services in the community. Services may include:
 - In-home protective services to keep a child safely in the family home and improve family functioning
 - Temporary out-of-home care during investigation

CPS Case Closure

- ◆ After 90 days, CPS services must end unless one of the following formal arrangements is in place:
 - A court order, or
 - A written and signed voluntary service agreement with the family
- ◆ Families with children who will need longer-term placements are transitioned to Child Welfare Services.

External Community Review

Community teams, comprised of community professionals and Children's Administration staff, provide the foundation for a community response to difficult abuse and neglect cases.

- ◆ Child Protection Teams review high risk CPS cases and cases with professional disagreement.
 - ◆ Child Fatality Review Teams review all child deaths in state care and child deaths from abuse or neglect
 - ◆ Reviewers look at both practice and systemic issues.
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- ◆ Based on current funding, Children's Administration social workers will have an average caseload of 29 at the end of FY2001. More information about budget and caseload can be obtained from the Children's Administration Office of Budget, Accounting and Contracts.
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PROGRAM RESULTS

- ◆ CPS received over 76,000 reports of suspected child abuse and neglect in CY 2000 (exact figures to be run in late January 2001.)
- ◆ Between 1993 and 1999, on average, slightly over 75,000 reports of suspected abuse or neglect were reported annually.
- ◆ Over 58,000 child victims identified in over 40,000 child abuse and neglect referrals were assessed by CPS in CY 1999.
- ◆ Referrals to CPS peaked in 1997 and have decreased slightly since then.
- ◆ Although most allegation types are relatively stable, neglect, as a category, has shown a steady increase in numbers.

